

421 This is so, however, only in appearance. The hut is built by all
594 the different families, but each family is regarded as owning
342 a certain portion of the hut when it is finished, and it is the
family that keeps this part of the hut in repair.

421 A canoe is cut by a number of men together. From the
501 outset, however, it is the property of one man, who selects
• 476 the tree and superintends the operation of cutting it into shape.
He is always one of the older men, and he enlists the services of
the younger men to help him. When finished the canoe is his
property, and he can do with it what he pleases, giving it away,
if he wishes, and no one has any share of ownership in a canoe
on the ground that he helped to make it.

421 While all portable property is thus owned by individuals, the
431 Andamanese have customs which result in an approach to com-
574 munism. One of these is the custom of constantly exchanging
presents with one another. When two friends meet who have
not seen each other for some time, one of the first things they
do is to exchange presents with one another. Even in the
ordinary everyday life of the village there is a constant giving
and receiving of presents. A younger man or woman may give
some article to an older one without expecting or receiving any
return, but between equals a person who gives a present always
expects that he will receive something of equal value in exchange.
At the meetings that take place between neighbouring local
groups the exchange of presents is of great importance. Each
of the visitors brings with him a number of articles that he
distributes amongst the members of the group that he visits.
When the visitors depart they are loaded with presents received
from their hosts. It requires a good deal of tact on the part
of everyone concerned to avoid the unpleasantness that may
arise if a man thinks that he has not received things as valuable
as he has given, or if he fancies that he has not received quite the
same amount of attention as has been accorded to others.

431 It is considered a breach of good manners ever to refuse
576 the request of another. Thus if a man be asked by another
to give him anything that he may possess, he will immediately
do so. If the two men are equals a return of about the same
value will have to be made. As between an older married man

164 do they suffer from the eye infections that are so common in the tropics. Their
151 highly trained eye can distinguish at a great distance small vessels on the
troubled waters of the sea that people with normal eyesight could not perceive
without a telescope. Normal vision, I suppose, is the same for the entire human
123 race; but we exercise our eyesight less. In the dark fastness of the jungle, the
151 Onge were able to point out birds sitting motionless high up in the trees,
quite invisible to me notwithstanding my experience in collecting even the
tiniest specimens. With their sharp eyes they sought out for me a collection
of minute mimetic amphibians living far from the ground on tree trunks,
previously unknown to science. The same thing often happened when I was
unable to see as far as they did. The help of my savage friends was invaluable
in avoiding the poisonous snakes that we met with daily in our camps or while
travelling. For our protection, the Onge always marched in front of my men.
They could discern reptiles hanging from branches among thick foliage, wait-
ing to bite us on the neck, or lying perfectly still in the tall grass, ready to
~~attack our legs. The only trouble we had with snakes was when the men I had~~
brought from India, in moments of enthusiasm ran ahead into the interior
of the jungle, eluding their Onge vanguard.

752 The Onge themselves, however, are sometimes bitten by snakes, with
123 dire consequences. Happily the Andamanese snakes are less deadly than the
[136] same species on the continent, and few deaths occur from snake bite; but it
[222] can curtail a man's activity for several months. In March 1953 an Onge friend
of about 25 who had climbed a tall tree to collect honey, inadvertently seized
with his left hand a snake concealed in a tuft of creepers, and was bitten above
the elbow. Frightful swelling ensued, together with shooting pains and a
raging fever. The man was brought to me unconscious, his left arm had already
assumed the appearance of a huge, rigid, elongated sausage. The Onge had
smeared all his body, and particularly the wounded arm, with ochre mixed
with honey, turtle fat and rough clay. They have no specific remedy for snake
bite. It was too late, but in an attempt to save the patient an antiophidic
injection was practiced on him. Within a few hours he appeared to rally. I saw
him again after eleven days; his arm had been treated in the Onge way and
put in a sling made of ficus bark cut into narrow strips. Fever had disappeared,
and in part also the swelling, so he could move his elbow a little. The skin
peeled off the whole length of the arm. Where the fangs had entered the flesh
two round, red, suppurating wounds, 1 cm in diameter, were discernible under a
layer of clay and honey. The man recovered in about two months. During his
illness the people who shared his communal hut exempted him, his wife and his
children from all work, and supplied them with all requirements. This occurs in
every case of illness, showing the complete solidarity that prevails among those
simple people - once considered ferocious. Always, if the wife is ill, the husband
is automatically relieved of his hunting, fishing and food-collecting duties.
Friends provide food for the family, no matter how many the members thereof.

164 In Little Andaman, we Europeans are constantly threatened with mala-
143 ria. Should we fail to take all necessary precautions we would catch it upon
setting foot on the island. The Onge are all infected, but it does not upset

HARVEST OF HONEY

less plentiful and containing a great deal of wax, and is greatly prized by the Onges. The darker bees, common in China, Celebes, Borneo and beyond, build their nests in cavities in the rocks, or in tree-trunks. Their honey, darker and with less wax, is more plentiful, but not so fine; when there is enough of the golden honey the Onges ignore the darker variety. 136 262

Few of the fruits on Little Andaman contain much sugar, but the Onges eat more than enough honey to compensate any deficiency that would otherwise occur. Whatever the fruit in season, men, women and children climb happily about like acrobats, hanging in the trees to get at it and the honey that goes with it. To chop the tree down is, of course, easiest and the obvious first choice for any Onge. Failing this, and their hooked poles, they climb up the nearby lianas into the branches, or walk up the trunk - an easy feat for them with their very long arms and almost prehensile toes. 222 [46]

Although there are arak nuts and betel leaves in the forest, the Onges ignore them. They are the same variety as elsewhere; *Areca catechu* and *Piper betel*. The Nicobarese are so addicted to them that many have lips and teeth hideously deformed as a result, but this is quite unknown among the Onges, contrary to earlier reports. The appearance of addiction in the Nicobars may have occurred after the separation of the peoples. 137 276 [71]

With all these fruits the Onges consume vast quantities of honey from the two species of bee, *dorsata* and *nigrocinta*. During the rainy season they can only get at the darker, poorer honey of *nigrocinta*, which builds nests under boulders or in crevices of trees or rocks. The Onges' real honey orgies occur, therefore, in the dry season, when the honey birds (*Indicationidae*), common in Africa and all over Asia, lead them to the trees where the golden honey of *dorsata* is hidden. 222 262 136

When one of the Onges finds a nest of bees he puts a mark on the rock or tree as a sign of ownership. None of the others would then dare to take possession of it, for fear of punishment by the group,¹ but when the time comes to take the honey everyone helps in the hard work of getting at the nest and opening it up. On one trip from Labanar to Togalanghe, on 19 March 1954, the Onges pointed out over twenty *Nigrocinta* nests to me, all reserved ready for use 222 423 [476]

¹ However deep in the forest a crime is committed, it will inevitably be discovered in the end, and punished by banishment from the community. [627]